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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TBILISI 002764

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DEPT FOR EUR DAS BRYZA AND EUR/CARC

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/05/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [GG](#)

SUBJECT: PROTEST IN TBILISI SITREP NO. 1

REF: TBILISI 2762

Classified By: Ambassador John F. Tefft for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (SBU) This cable provides a rough timeline of ongoing events on November 7 regarding protests against the Saakashvili government in front of Parliament, and the police actions that have been used to break up the protests and push people to the perimeter streets.

12. (C) Chronology of Events on November 7. Note: Times are approximate.

- 1300 Hours: Approximately 2,000 protesters had reassembled in front of Parliament. They were pushing with police against barricades, which patrol police were using to try and keep people out of the streets. Police beat some protesters with batons, much of which was shown on TV.

- Police riot vehicles and anti-riot police wearing gas masks assembled in front of the crowds, estimates placed police presence at around 500.

- 1315: The riot vehicles opened water cannons onto the crowds, and the riot police advanced, firing tear gas. The crowd rapidly fell back, but stayed on the streets and side streets.

- 1415: The action in the streets continued, although the area immediately in front of Parliament was largely cleared of protesters. Occasionally water cannons and tear gas were still used.

- 1430: Some protesters entered Parliament, the neighboring School #1, and the Khashueti church across the street from Parliament.

- 1445: Interior Minister Vano Merabishvili was seen on Rustaveli in front of Parliament, shaking police officers' hands and reviewing the assorted police officers (incl. traffic police, criminal police, and SOD anti-riot units.)

- MP Giga Bokeria repeatedly addressed the media, stating that the government was within its rights to disperse the protesters and that this happens frequently in democratic countries.

- 1500: Speaker Burjanadze said she would hold meetings with the opposition, and asked people to leave the area of the Parliament. She said protesters inside Parliament should be removed.

- Patriarch Ilia II of the Georgian Orthodox Church again appealed for calm and offered to mediate the crisis.

- Prime Minister Zurab Noghaidei addressed the media, explaining that the government had a responsibility to

disperse the protests, and that this was a legally-based decision.

- Reports came in that the police had used tear gas in the church and School #1.

- Police cordoned off more streets around Rustaveli Avenue near Parliament, and restricted all vehicles and crowds from entering. Only certain individuals, guests at the nearby Marriott Hotel and residents were allowed in.

- Police entered the side streets trying to clear out the pockets of remaining protesters.

- 1515: NDI's Chief of Party reported to Poloff that she had been inside Parliament at 1300, and witnessed the event from the beginning. She said it was clear that the police initiated the action leading to push the crowds off the street in front of Parliament.

- Member of Parliament Nika Rurua, a government supporter, told the press that the state has the right to defend itself and that sometimes the implementation of the law is not pleasant to watch. Television airwaves are filled with angry denunciations of the government's move against the demonstrators.

- 1530: The crowds continued to mass near the perimeters police had established. Estimates put the crowds at 5,000. Police were using batons to keep protesters away from the barricades.

- 1545: Police again clashed with protesters, using batons and tear gas, in front of the Opera House, a few hundred

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yards down Rustaveli from Parliament.

- Opposition leader Goga Khaindrava was released from police custody. He had been detained by police earlier in the day for a few hours after the demonstration was broken up, allegedly on suspicion of being intoxicated with drugs. Upon his release he immediately condemned the action and blamed it directly on President Saakashvili.

- 1600: Opposition leaders reconvened in Rike, a wide space across the river from Tbilisi's Old Town. They are calling for people to come there. It appears 1,000 people are assembled there with them.

- 1615: Speaker of Parliament Burjanadze has become the face of the government in dealing with the opposition and once again called for dialogue. She offered to meet with opposition leaders. Burjanadze called on every citizen to support the state, which she said is facing a critical "exam." She said the government had offered compromises on three of the four demands on November 6, but that the opposition had refused to accept them.

TEFFT